



# LaDOTD Acquirer

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*"What acquiring minds want to know"*

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## Retirements, AASHTO, AARS

### Director's Report

By: Jim Dousay

**T**wo of our managers – Richard McElveen and Ronnie Smith – have recently retired. Another District Manager and senior Real Estate Specialist will be retiring in the near future. This is kind of a double edged sword. It seems that they will be going to work for consultants. These people have a lot of expertise in relocation, which should help to advance the consultant projects. On the other hand, the whole project Development Division is under hiring constraints. Our current number of authorized positions is 97, and we currently have 96 employees. So you can see that it will be difficult to hire new employees. Each decision whether or not to hire a new employee will be on a case-by-case basis.

On a related subject, we are trying to finalize the Process Improvement process. This should be in the implementation process, soon.. We are still looking for ideas for process improvements. In the meantime we have been working on several "high profile" projects. I would like to complement Real Estate employees

for pulling together to meet some critical letting dates.

From May 15-19, I will be in Austin, TX attending the AASHTO conference. I will be moderating two sessions. One will be on Electronic Right of Way Systems. Pam Leon will be one of the panelists. The other will be on Evaluation of Billboards. Panelists include Rudy Aguilar, who is considered an expert in the valuation of billboards; Charlie Floyd, who is an advocate of treating billboards as personal property; and Allen Smith, an attorney from Dallas, TX. There should be fireworks in this one!

Pam Leon and Jamie Bouillion are working with Xybernaut Solutions to make AARS more user friendly to consultants. When AARS was originally programmed, it was set up to be used by all browsers. This caused it to be less sophisticated than the internal component. It also led to problems in diagnosing problems, because the Xybernaut people would not know what browser was being used by the person with the problem. It will be redesigned for Internet Explorer, which should help with problems our consultants have had. ♦

## Trying again - Congress takes up transportation bill

<http://transportation1.org/aashtonew/>

**T**he House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on Wednesday (3/2/05) reported out a six-year, \$284 billion highway and transit reauthorization bill, but major issues remain to be addressed when the bill comes to the floor next week.



The bill, H.R. 3, the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users, was approved by voice vote following a markup which included few amendments other than an amendment that included 3,315 earmarks of

highway and transit projects, and incorporated technical changes.

As Chairman Don Young (R-AK) had indicated, the funding level of the bill matches the \$284 billion in obligation authority proposed by the President's budget in February. That includes:

- ✓ \$225.5 billion for the Federal Highway Administration;
- ✓ \$52.3 billion for the Federal Transit Administration;
- ✓ \$3.2 billion for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration; and
- ✓ \$2.9 billion for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

The bill does not include the full level for contract authority, however, which will be added on the House floor based on the resolution of how to address minimum guarantee issues. Throughout the reauthorization debate donor states have urged that the current 90.5 percent return on contributions to the Highway Trust Fund be increased to 95 percent. Although Young and House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-TX) have reportedly reached an accord on the scope of the programs to be included in the minimum guarantee, that has not been signed off on by other members.

The dilemma facing transportation leaders is how to achieve an increased minimum guarantee within the \$284 billion funding level, without reducing

funding for other states below current levels. The House bill contains a "reopener" provision which would halt the distribution of federal funds to the states effective October 1, 2005 unless Congress increases the rate of return to 92 percent for Fiscal Year 2006, increasing 1 percent per year to reach 95 percent in 2009. The Administration opposes such a provision.

Speaking at AASHTO's Washington Briefing shortly after markup, Graham Hill, staff director for the committee, said that the minimum guarantee section is still the subject of negotiations and will be added to the bill on the floor. "Our desire is to achieve a bipartisan bill that all



parties, both donor and donee, think is progress," he said. He added that, "We want to get it done, but it is not inevitable. There are still a lot of problems and things to get fixed," he said. "We want very much not to do another extension. We think it could undermine the whole process" of multi-year reauthorizations, he said.

Now in the 18th month of delay, the authorization of the federal aid programs has been continued through six short-term extensions, the latest of which expires on May 31. ♦

## U.S. infrastructure gets a 'D'

### Engineers' report card sees decline vs. 2001

**C**rowded schools, traffic-choked roads and transit cutbacks are eroding the quality of American life, according to an analysis by civil engineers that gave the nation's infrastructure an overall grade of D. A report by the American Society of Civil Engineers released Wednesday (3/9/05) assessed the four-year trend in the condition of 12 categories of infrastructure



The overall grade slipped from the D+ given in 2001 and 2003. Overall conditions remained the same for bridges, dams and solid waste, the group said, and worsened in roads, drinking water, transit, wastewater, hazard waste, navigable waterways and energy. "The condition of our nation's roads, bridges, drinking water systems and other public works have shown little to no improvement since they were graded an overall D+ in 2001, with some areas sliding toward failing grades," the society said.

"Americans are spending more time stuck in traffic and less time at home with their families," William Henry, the group's president, said in a statement. "We need to establish a comprehensive, long-term infrastructure plan



as opposed to our current 'patch and pray' method to ensure a better quality of life for everyone." The report said \$1.6 trillion should be spent over the next five years to alleviate potential problems with the nation's infrastructure.

Transportation alone requires \$94 billion in annual spending, the report said, yet gets only \$59 billion.

The House is to begin debate Wednesday (3/9/05) on a six-year, \$284 billion highway and mass transit bill, which stalled last year in a money dispute between the White House and Congress. ♦

## Remember the pelican? It's coming back!

<http://www.dps.state.la.us/omv/>

**T**he Return of the Pelican. Since license plates were first issued by the state of Louisiana, the brown pelican, official state bird of Louisiana, has made sporadic appearances on the state-issued license plates. Thanks to our legislators, the profile of the pelican will once again grace the face of Louisiana's private

passenger plates, as directed by HCR #121 of the 2004 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature. The "Pelican" plates will be issued once the state supply of the current Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial plates is exhausted.



The pelican graced license plates for many years

### Some History

The following are just a few "plate" points of interest. OMV's plates are manufactured by Prison Enterprises at the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola. In fact, Angola inmates have been manufacturing license plates since 1932. Interestingly, Prison Enterprises manufactures the official license plates not only for the State of Louisiana, but also for the U.S. Commonwealth of Puerto Rico.

At different times, plates have been made of various materials. From 1903 to 1912, New Orleanians had homemade plates constructed of leather. Between 1912 and 1914, when cities and parishes were still issuing their own plates, the plates were made of porcelain. In 1915, the state took over manufacture of all plates and the first metal plates were issued. World War II, however, only trucks were issued metal plates while autos and motorcycles were issued paper windshield tags as a result of the steel shortage. In 1944 the steel shortage endured and the state heeded the adage that necessity is the mother of invention; innovative cardboard plates made from bagasse (sugar cane residue) were issued. Finally, once the war rationing was ended and steel was again freely available, it was used to make all plates until 1974 when Louisiana switched to the lighter weight aluminum plates.



Current Plate

Louisiana has displayed various mottos on vehicle license plates through the years. Most popular of all, however, has been

"Sportsmen's Paradise". Others include: "LSU Centennial"—1960, "Bayou State"—1974-1978, "World's Fair"—1983-1984. ♦

## Richard McElveen's Retirement



Jim Dousay presents  
Richard his retirement  
certificate from DOTD



Ronnie Smith also  
addressed the crowd

On February 11, employees and friends and family gathered at Headquarters to wish Administrative Manager Richard McElveen good luck on his retirement. Ronnie Smith, District Manager at Chase, also announced his retirement at the event.



Richard's family was there to help  
celebrate the occasion

Besides Real Estate Administrator Jim Dousay, several people spoke, including District Manager Don Bernard, Karen Hider of FHWA, and Grace Chatham of Compliance Programs.



### "Avoid Clichés like the plague"

<http://story.news.yahoo.com/news>

**T**he fact of the matter is that at the end of the day there is nothing, like, value-added about using clichés 24/7 - with all due respect it's not awesome, it's annoying. The Plain English Campaign said it had canvassed people in 70 countries to find the most irritating phrases of all.

"When readers or listeners come across these tired expressions, they start tuning out and completely miss the message - assuming there is one" said John Lister of the Plain English Campaign.

People who busily "touch base" or talk about "ballpark figures" and "bottom lines" are not "singing from the same hymn sheet," they are quietly driving others to distraction. "Using these terms in daily business is about as professional as

wearing a novelty tie or having a wacky ringtone on your phone," Lister said in a statement.

A particular bugbear is the constant use of "like" as a form of punctuation. Lister said that they had expected geographical variations, but the same phrases appeared to be universally annoying around the world. Other named-and-shamed clichés include:

- ☑ blue-sky thinking
- ☑ it's not rocket science
- ☑ crack troops
- ☑ between a rock and a hard place
- ☑ I hear what you're saying
- ☑ touch base
- ☑ bear with me
- ☑ to be honest with you



## Congratulations To . . .

**Charlene Dean**, who received her *Decided 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Black Belt* in Martial Arts on February 4, 2005. This a step up from the Black Belt she received in December.

## Dude, where's my car II

<http://www.statefarm.com/insuranc/auto/nicbcars/louisiana>

Which cars are stolen most often in Louisiana?

1. Chevrolet Full Size C/K Pickup
2. Ford Full Size Pickup (150/250/350)
3. Oldsmobile Cutlass/Supreme/Ciera
4. Jeep Cherokee/Grand Cherokee
5. Honda Accord
6. Dodge Intrepid
7. Toyota Camry
8. Oldsmobile Delta 88/Royale
9. Dodge Caravan/Grand Caravan
10. Dodge Ram Pickup
11. Dodge Stratus
12. Ford Taurus
13. Chevrolet Caprice
14. Chrysler/Dodge/Plymouth Neon
15. Ford Explorer
16. Buick LeSabre
17. Chevrolet/GMC Suburban
18. Pontiac Grand Am
19. GMC Full Size C/K Pickup
20. Nissan Altima
21. Ford Mustang
22. Chevrolet Cavalier
23. Honda Civic
24. Cadillac Deville
25. Nissan Sentra



## In time for St. Paddy's Day – Irish names are “in”

<http://family.msn.com/tool/article>

Is it just pure luck that Irish baby names are a smash hit right now? Whether or not they can trace their heritage back to the Emerald Isle, thousands of American parents are giving their children Irish monikers. Celebrities, too, struck gold with Irish names in 2004: Musician Lou Rawls, actress Tracey Gold, and skater Scott Hamilton all named their sons Aiden (with various spellings). In fact, of the top 1,000 names in the country in 2003, Aiden was the 39th most popular, according to the Social Security Administration. Perhaps that's because Aiden means "fire" in Celtic.

Other currently popular Irish boys' names are Ryan, Aidan, Liam, Ciaran (pronounced "keer-in"), Declan, Casey, Evan, Brady, Corey, Brendan, Colin, Riley, and Conor, according to



[babynamesofireland.com](http://babynamesofireland.com) -- which thankfully has an Irish name pronunciation guide -- and the Social Security Administration. Sean (61st most popular), Shane (150th), Kevin (31st), Cole (70th), and Brian (58th) also topped the charts.

Popular Irish girls' names include Siobhan (pronounced "shiv-awn," the name of WNBA star Rebecca Lobo's daughter), Aisling, Tara, Deirdre, Bailey, Maureen, Mackenzie (the 2005 newborn of *Harry Potter* mastermind J.K. Rowling), Kaitlyn, and Eileen.

Strangely, Colleen and Megan -- which many Americans assume to be traditional Irish names -- dropped in rank this year. Perhaps parents realized that "Colleen" in Irish Gaelic, translates directly to "girl." ("This is our daughter, Girl."). And Megan? Megan's actually Greek, not Irish. ♦



## **“Quotable”**

***“You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.” – Abraham Lincoln***

***“If you find it in your heart to care for somebody else, you will have succeeded.” - Maya Angelou***

***“There is nothing so easy to learn as experience and nothing so hard to apply.” - Josh Billings***

***“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.” - Winston Churchill***

***“Bad habits are like a comfortable bed, easy to get into, but hard to get out of.” - Unknown***

***“When we are planning for posterity, we ought to remember that virtue is not hereditary.” - Thomas Paine***

***“Congress is so strange. A man gets up to speak and says nothing. Nobody listens -- and then everybody disagrees.” - Boris Marshalov***

***“You got to be careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there.” - Yogi Berra***

***“Live your life and forget your age.” - Norman Vincent Peale***

